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Committee on Relations with the Host Country

Letter dated 5 August 2009 from the Minister Counsellor for Host Country Affairs of the United States Mission to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country

I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 26 June 2009 addressed to the Secretary-General by the Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations concerning "an unjustified delay" in issuing a visa to the Venezuelan Minister of Finance, Mr. Ali Rodriguez Araque, who planned to come to United Nations Headquarters to participate in the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development.

As you are aware, the Conference in question began on Wednesday, 24 June. The Venezuelan Foreign Ministry sent Mr. Rodriguez's passport to the Consular Section of the United States Embassy in Caracas on the very day the Conference began. The United States Embassy was closed that day out of respect for a Venezuelan national holiday, but a consular officer nonetheless opened the Consular Section to accept the passport and initiate the necessary administrative processing. Given that the Minister was travelling to New York to attend an official United Nations meeting, the Consular Section in Caracas requested expedited processing of the visa application. Two members of the United States Mission staff contacted the Permanent Representative of Venezuela during the evening of 25 June to assure him that the highest levels of the Bureau of Consular Affairs at the Department of State were giving special attention to the case.

Less than 48 hours after the visa application was submitted, Mr. Rodriguez was issued a G-2 visa. The visa was delivered to him at the airport, where he was boarding a plane for the United States. I would further note that the records of the United States Department of Homeland Security show that Mr. Rodriguez indeed entered the United States at Teterboro Airport in New Jersey aboard flight ZZ 1496 at 7.29 p.m. on Friday, 26 June 2009 on that visa.

The United States Mission has consistently suggested to all permanent missions to the United Nations that delegations coming to official meetings apply for any necessary visas as far in advance of the meetings as possible. We have stressed the importance of early applications to the Permanent Mission of Venezuela to the United Nations in particular, as Venezuelan delegations to United Nations

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meetings very often apply at the last minute. Considering that Mr. Rodriguez only applied for his visa after the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis had begun, and given that his visa was issued in less than 48 hours, the United States Mission firmly rejects the Venezuelan allegation of an unjustifiable delay.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter as a document of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

(*Signed*) Russell F. **Graham**
Minister Counsellor for
Host Country Affairs